

1994

## The secret journal of Captain Cook

Mark McKirdy  
*University of Wollongong*

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THE SECRET JOURNAL OF CAPTAIN COOK

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

MARK McKIRDY M.C.A.

SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

1994



DECLARATION

The thesis, *The Secret Journal of Captain Cook*, and its accompanying annotations, have not been submitted for a degree to any other university or institution.

Signed ..... *Mark McKindry* .....  
Date ..... *August 1 1994* .....

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to acknowledge the assistance given to me in the preparation of this thesis by the School of Creative Arts within the University of Wollongong.

## SUMMARY

On the 26th of August, 1768, James Cook sailed from Plymouth in his ship, the *Endeavour*. It was the first of three great voyages by Cook, and part of his commission was to observe the Transit of Venus in Tahiti in June, 1769, and to then locate, if possible, the Great Southern Continent before returning to England. Cook completed the former, and on the 19th of April, 1770, he located the latter, sailing up the east coast of Australia till the *Endeavour* ran aground near *Cape Tribulation* on the 11th of June, 1770. The ship was repaired and finally reached England on 13 July, 1771.

In his daily journal, Cook recorded the details of the voyage along the east coast of Australia, and ascribed the main cause of his ship running aground to the inconstancy of unfamiliar waters.

My thesis, *The Secret Journal of Captain Cook*, concentrates on the Australian section of Cook's first voyage, from April 19, 1770 till mid June, 1770, and purports to be Cook's 'truthful' account of what really happened during that time. It was supposedly written in his house at Mile End not long after he had returned to England.

As he states in this 'newly-discovered' work, it was not the inconstancy of unfamiliar waters which was the cause of the ship running aground. The truth of the matter was that the crew Cook took with him was so

incompetent and preoccupied with personal feuds that disaster was inevitable.

Being an honourable man, Cook felt compelled to set the record straight, irrespective of the cost to his reputation or naval future.

Cook's authentic and serious account of his first voyage was written in diary format. Unlike that diary, my thesis is a humorous, largely fictitious, first-person narrative.

THE SECRET JOURNAL OF CAPTAIN COOK

Being the True Account of the *Endeavour*  
and Her Crew in the Antipodes

1770



## Contents

### Introduction

Section 1: Ebb and Flow      April 1770

Section 2: Changing Currents      May 1770

Section 3: Washed Up      June 1770

Section 4: A Plot Writ Large

## Introduction

The remarkable document revealed for the first time within these bindings began its own voyage into the broad, and sometimes hostile, waters of scholastic scrutiny and public interest on a blustery English day in the autumn of 1983.

I was in residence at Balliol College, Oxford, preparing a post-doctoral dissertation on electromagnetic radiation and how microwaves in their various lengths have greatly advanced the science of reheating left-overs. As I was about to place a portion of yesterday's pork pie into the oven, my concentration was interrupted by a knock on the door. Upon opening it, I was greeted by a grey-haired, leather-faced old man in a blue duffel coat. When he removed the pipe from his mouth and said, "Mornin'. William Abernathy, able seaman, retired, Sir," his voice was the deeply resonating result of years of salt, aromatic Amphora and rum.

Abernathy knew of my work in the fields of science, anthropology and history, and he told me that he possessed a manuscript which might be of interest.

Unaware at the time of the significance of his remark, I ushered him into the room and closed the door. For me, another was about to open.

Depositing his skeletonised frame into a chair, Abernathy then unbuttoned his coat and produced the dust-covered volume. I put my glasses on and read the title; *The Secret Journal of Captain Cook*. It was an exhilarating moment.

After scanning the text for a few minutes, I asked Abernathy how he'd come by the manuscript and he explained that it had been in his family since it had been willed to his great-great grandfather, the publisher whom Cook had submitted it to following his 1770 antipodean voyage.

According to my visitor, the manuscript, whose publication had been suppressed by the Admiralty because it reflected poorly on several prominent members of that august body, had then passed into the hands of succeeding Abernathy generations.

As the present holder had no heirs, or indeed graces, judging by the way he polished off my pie, he had decided to donate the journal to the University.

Hence our meeting.

During the years since my introduction to the manuscript, much research has taken place in order to validate it and I am now in a position, after consulting extensively with England's A.J.P. Taylor and Australia's Geoffrey Blainey, to stake my reputation on the fact that it is authentic.

I have now released the Cook manuscript to public exhibition because of its intrinsic historical interest, its implications upon the body of work in anthropology and as a result of being offered a whacking great advance by *Oxford University Press*.

Mark McKirdy  
On Sabbatical,  
Poolside Bar,  
Club Med,  
Tahiti 1992.

Annotations  
to Thesis  
and Preliminary Work

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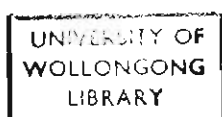
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1994

## CONTENTS

- 1) The Origins of the Novel
- 2) The Novel's Structure
- 3) The Novel's Premise
- 4) Creative Intentions
- 5) Relevant Theories of Humour
- 6) Process of Writing: Preliminary Work
- 7) Purposes in Creating Preliminary Work
- 8) Extract from Preliminary Work
- 9) Process of Writing: The Narrative
- 10) Problems Encountered During Development
- 11) Historical Fiction: Paper Presented at Post-Graduate  
Seminar
- 12) Historical Research Relating to the Narrative
- 13) Research Through Interview
- 14) Research Relating to Theories of Humour
- 15) Amendment
- 16) Bibliography